

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Olympic gymnast Max Whitlock

The prized possession you value above all others... My first Olympic medals – the team bronze and pommel bronze from London 2012. They're even more important than my two golds from Rio 2016 for floor and pommel because I went into London an underdog.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Going too slowly on a speed lap when I filmed Top Gear recently. Chris Hoy beat me by four seconds!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Trainers. I designed some when I was sponsored by Adidas and it became a passion. I have 80-100 pairs.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Set yourself goals. My mother and father, Madeleine and Brian, taught me that.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Achieve The Impossible by Professor Greg Whyte. It teaches you how to achieve by setting targets and believing in yourself.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... Japan's Kohei Uchimura is the greatest gymnast of all time, but he's secretive, so I'd watch him train.

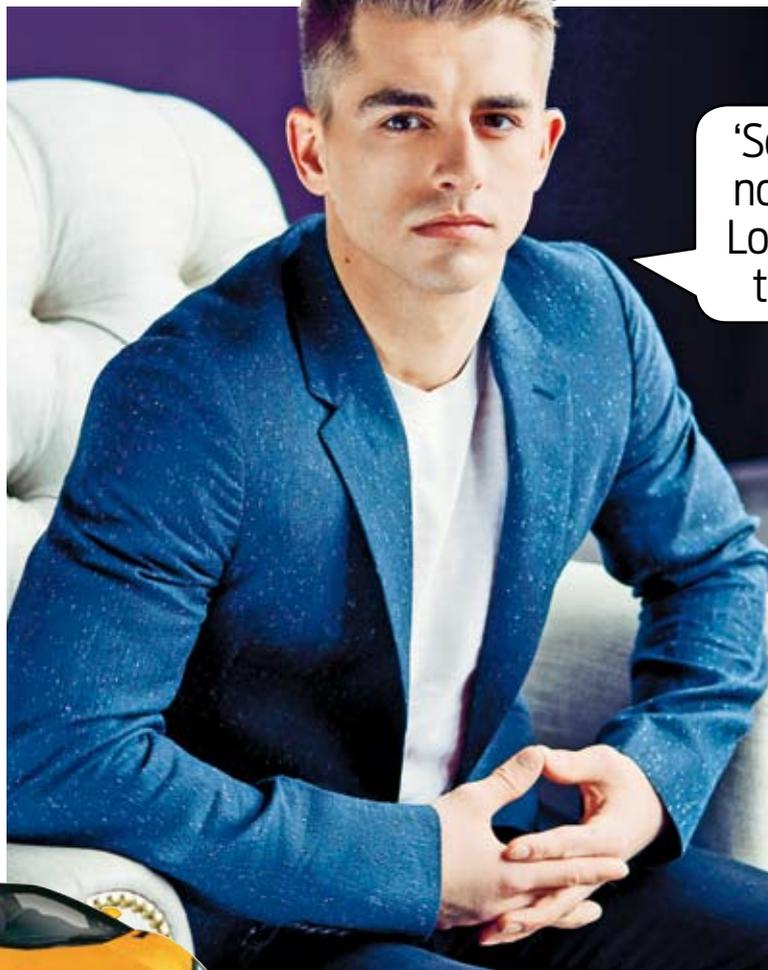
The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People not holding the door open for others gets me really frustrated.

The film you can watch time and time again... I've enjoyed The Fast And The Furious films. They're crazy but fun.

The person who has influenced you most... My family is an incredible support, but I couldn't have achieved anything without my coach Scott Hann. I've been with him since I was 12.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd hang out with Muhammad Ali when he won his Olympic gold in 1960 as Cassius Clay. I'd ask what winning meant to him and his dreams for the future.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I love gangsta rap such as 21 Savage. The words and the beat get me motivated.



'Some people said I had no chance of winning at London 2012. It felt good to prove them wrong'



The crime you would commit knowing you could get away

with it... I'd borrow a Lamborghini Aventador – an orange one, as it's my favourite colour – and drive it at full speed on the German autobahn.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The photos I took at London 2012. I deleted them by accident when I updated my phone.

The unending quest that drives you on... To have Max Whitlock Gymnastics clubs all over the country, so every kid can have a go. I'm opening the first one in October and I hope it takes off.

The poem that touches your soul... If by Rudyard Kipling. I'm moved by the lines telling you to be humble.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To create a move on the pommel that will be named The Whitlock. I'm close to perfecting one.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm tall. People are shocked when they meet me and say, 'I thought you'd be taller!' Gymnasts are small. I'm 5ft 6in – but I'm taller than my dad!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Winning those two medals at London 2012. Some senior people in gymnastics said I had no chance and I was laughed at, so it felt good to prove people wrong.

The song that means most to you... Fast Car by Tracy Chapman because it reminds me of my mum taking me to training. We always had Heart radio on and they played it constantly. Mum would pick me up from school at noon and we'd get home at 9pm. She had to wait six hours while I trained, but never complained. She was amazing.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd have a room-service breakfast – a full fry-up and pancakes – at Gilpin Hotel in the Lake District with my fiancée Leah. I proposed to her there last year and it's so beautiful. Then we'd go to Dubai, which is one of my favourite places. We'd have a villa at Anantara The Palm hotel and relax by the beach before going quad biking in the desert. Then we'd go to the

Aquaventure Waterpark – you're never too old for a waterpark! Later I'd go skiing in the Alps. I've been once before and loved it, but I haven't been allowed again because of gymnastics. I've also always wanted to do a sky-dive, so maybe I can do that and land back in my garden at home in Essex. My favourite thing is to have all my and Leah's family round to our house for a roast dinner, so we'd do that all evening, then just chill out and chat.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Proposing to Leah during a picnic by Windermere. It was so nerve-racking I couldn't get my words out. It was way scarier than the Olympics.

The saddest time that shook your world... When a friend died earlier this year, in tragic circumstances, aged just 32. It was so sad and made me value the people I love more than ever.

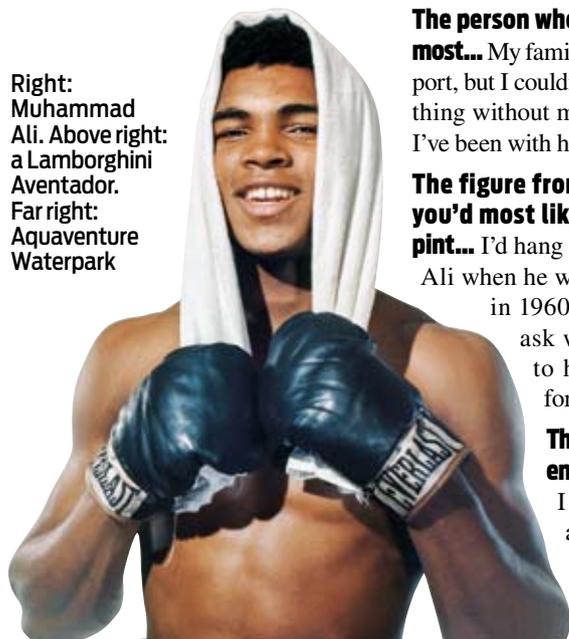
The philosophy that underpins your life... Never worry about what others are doing, just concentrate on doing your job well.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm 24, so too young to give it much thought. I expect I'll want a celebration and for everyone to wear orange to brighten it up. And I'd like a burst of gangsta rap to give people a jolt.

The way you want to be remembered... As a genuine, humble person and one of the greatest gymnasts ever.

The Plug... Max is a DFS ambassador. Visit dfs.co.uk ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



Right: Muhammad Ali. Above right: a Lamborghini Aventador. Far right: Aquaventure Waterpark

PS...

Brian Cox is Churchill, in cinemas Friday. Alison Moyet's new album, Other, is out the same day. And The Addams Family Musical tour – starring Les Dennis as Uncle Fester – is at the Theatre Royal Bath from Tuesday



NEXT WEEK

- Piers Morgan invites us into his London home
- Which of our perfect pies will you bake for Father's Day?
- Grow salad leaves with Monty Don
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings